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REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES
AND PEOPLES

MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS BY COLONIAL POWERS IN TERRITORIES UNDER THEIR ADMINISTRATION WHICH MIGHT BE IMPEDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

BERMUDA

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

1. Basic information on military activities and arrangements in Bermuda is contained in the previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/1143). Supplementary information is set out below.

2. Since 31 March 1976, a Senior Resident Naval Officer has represented the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Bermuda and has been in charge of a naval dockyard facility, the HMS Malabar. The officer is responsible for administration of the military installation on Ireland Island on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief, Fleet, at Northwood, Middlesex, England. He is also charged with coordination of plans of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for the defence and support of the Territory.

3. The United States of America maintains military installations in Bermuda under the United States Base Agreement of 1941, which is to expire in the year 2040. The two existing facilities, namely, the Naval Air Station at St. George's and the King's Point Naval Station, are operated by the United States Navy. Together they comprise about one tenth of Bermuda's total area. The commanding officer of the Naval Air Station acts as Task Group Commander of anti-submarine warfare in the area surrounding Bermuda, as well as Director of Naval Shipping and as United States coordinating authority in Bermuda. He has approximately 1,500 enlisted personnel, including 100 marines, under his command.

4. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the United States maintains a tracking station on Cooper's Island as part of its world-wide space flight tracking and data network.

5. As reported in a previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/1065, para. 10), discussions were held between defence officials of the United States and the United Kingdom regarding the closure of the United States Naval Annex at Southampton and the establishment of a joint NATO base at the Royal Naval base at HMS Malabar. The NATO base would be used to provide NATO vessels that call at Bermuda with repair and refuelling services, supplies, and medical attention and relaxation for their crews.

6. In June 1992, the United States Navy confirmed that it would close its Naval Annex at Southampton in 1994. 1/

7. The United States Navy has stated, however, that the base would continue its role of maintaining the NATO infrastructure, including a new hangar and taxi-way. 2/ Also, according to reports, the Navy did not plan to eliminate certain services which it provides to the Territory, namely, air traffic controllers for commercial and private aircraft; fire service for fires off the base; meteorological and search and rescue services; as well as maintenance of runways for civil aviation. 3/

8. Although it had been reported in June 1992 that the United States Naval Air Station would reduce its military personnel by 60 per cent over a two-year period, 1/ in March 1993, the United States Department of Defense reportedly stated that it did not intend to reduce its military presence in Bermuda, although many other overseas military sites were to be closed. 4/

9. It was subsequently broadcast by the media, however, that a report entitled "Review of Naval Air Station Bermuda" had recommended closure of the United States Naval Air Station. The report, which had been prepared for the United States Department of Defense, had called for the 50-year-old base to be closed no later than the end of fiscal year 1995. The report had been publicized by a United States journalist who, in December 1992, had aired a televised programme which exposed alleged abuses of time and money on the base. 5/ Shortly after the programme was broadcast in December, top officials at the base were accused of covering up two incidents which allegedly occurred on the base. The two negative reports surrounding the base led to a full-scale investigation which was ordered by the Chairperson of the House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities.

10. In April 1993, the Government of Canada closed its base, which it had maintained for 30 years at Daniel's Head, Somerset. The Canadian Government had announced earlier that it would close the base as part of massive reductions in its defence spending. The base reportedly employed 28 Bermudian civilians. 6/

11. In the light of impending base closures, in March 1992, the Bermuda Government launched a study on the impact of the closures of two of the Territory's four foreign military bases and of a 60 per cent reduction in personnel at the United States Naval Air Station. In a press interview on the matter, the Leader of the Opposition in Bermuda reportedly stated that the

reduction in personnel emphasized the need for immediate talks with the United States Government on the future of its bases. 2/

12. In June 1992, Sir John Swan, Premier of Bermuda, was reported to have stated that the Government would use "every possible means" to minimize the impact of any withdrawal from the United States base. Another important response, according to the Premier, would be to ensure that the Government did all in its power to improve foreign currency earnings from tourism and international business while developing new sources of income. The Premier also announced the establishment of two committees mandated to conduct a thorough examination of military bases in the Territory in order to determine what should be done with them in the face of military cuts. The first, a technical committee, was appointed to examine base property, inventory and buildings, as well as the leases held by the United States and Canadian Governments. The second committee was set up to examine possible future use for the land occupied by military bases. 1/

13. In March 1993, the Premier indicated that the Bermuda Government had made strong recommendations to the United States regarding the role that Bermuda played and could continue to play. Although the role of the base had changed over the years, it remained an important factor from a maritime and communications standpoint, and was of strategic importance to NASA. The Premier also argued that Bermuda is valuable to the United States in terms of drug containment, as well as mid-ocean search and rescue. 4/

Notes

1/ The Royal Gazette (Hamilton), 12 June 1992.

2/ Ibid., 6 March 1992.

3/ Ibid., 12 December 1992.

4/ Ibid., 13 March 1993.

5/ Ibid., 2 April 1993.

6/ Ibid., 30 April 1993.